

**"The Chaos"** by Dr. Gerard Nolst Trenité first appeared (in a shorter version) in an appendix to his textbook *Drop Your Foreign Accent*, published in 1920.

Dearest creature in creation,  
Studying English pronunciation,  
I will teach you in my verse  
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse, and worse.  
I will keep you, Susy, busy,  
Make your head with heat grow dizzy;  
Tear in eye, your dress you'll tear;  
So shall I! Oh, hear my prayer.

Pray, console your loving poet,  
Make my coat look new, dear, sew it!  
Just compare heart, beard, and heard,  
Dies and diet, lord and word.  
Sword and sward, retain and Britain  
(Mind the latter, how it's written!)  
Made has not the sound of bade,  
Say-said, pay-paid, laid, but plaid.

Now I surely will not plague you  
With such words as vague and ague,  
But be careful how you speak,  
Say break, steak, but bleak and streak.  
Previous, precious, fuchsia, via;  
Pipe, snipe, recipe and choir,  
Cloven, oven; how and low;  
Script, receipt; shoe, poem, toe.

Hear me say, devoid of trickery:  
Daughter, laughter and Terpsichore,  
Typhoid; measles, topsails, aisles;  
Exiles, similes, reviles;  
Wholly, holly; signal, signing;  
Thames; examining, combining;  
Scholar, vicar, and cigar,  
Solar, mica, war, and far.

From "desire": desirable--  
admirable from "admire";  
Lumber, plumber, bier, but brier;  
Chatham, brougham; renown but known,  
Knowledge; done, but gone and tone,  
One, anemone; Balmoral;  
Kitchen, lichen; laundry, laurel;  
Gertrude, German; wind and mind;  
Scene, Melpomene, mankind;

Tortoise, turquoise, chamois-leather,  
Reading, Reading, heathen, heather.  
This phonetic labyrinth  
Gives moss, gross, brook, brooch, ninth, plinth.  
Billet does not end like ballet;  
Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet;  
Blood and flood are not like food,  
Nor is mould like should and would.

Viscous, viscount; load and broad;  
Toward, to forward, to reward,  
And your pronunciation is OK,  
when you say correctly: croquet  
Rounded, wounded; grieve and sieve;  
Friend and fiend; alive and live.  
Liberty, library; heave and heaven;  
Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven,  
We say hallowed, but allowed;  
People, leopard; towed, but vowed.  
Mark the difference, moreover,  
Between mover, plover, Dover,

Leeches, breeches; wise, precise;  
Chalice but police and lice.  
Camel, constable, unstable;  
Principle, disciple; label;  
Petal, penal, and canal;  
Wait, surmise, plait, promise; pal.  
Suit, suite, ruin; circuit, conduit  
Rhyme with "shirk it" and "beyond it."

But it is not hard to tell  
Why it's pall, mall, but Pall Mall.  
Muscle, muscular; gaol, iron;  
Timber, climber; bullion, lion,  
Worm and storm; chaise, chaos, chair;  
Senator, spectator, mayor.  
Ivy, privy, famous; clamour  
And enamour rime with "hammer."

Pussy, hussy, and possess,  
Desert, but dessert, address.  
Golf, wolf, countenance, lieutenants  
Hoist in lieu of flags left pennants.  
Courier, courtier, tomb, bomb, comb,  
Cow, but Cowper, some, and home.  
"Solder, soldier! Blood is thicker,"  
Quoth he, "than liqueur or liquor,"

Making, it is sad but true,  
In bravado, much ado.  
Stranger does not rhyme with anger,  
Neither does devour with clangour.  
Pilot, pivot, gaunt, but aunt,  
Font, front, wont, want, grand, and grant.  
Arsenic, specific, scenic,  
Relic, rhetoric, hygienic.

Gooseberry, goose, and close, but close,  
Paradise, rise, rose, and dose.  
Say inveigh, neigh, but inveigle,  
Make the latter rhyme with eagle.  
Mind! Meandering but mean,  
Valentine and magazine.  
And I bet you, dear, a penny,  
You say mani-(fold) like many,  
Which is wrong. Say rapier, pier,  
Tier (one who ties), but tier.

Arch, archangel; pray, does erring  
Rhyme with herring or with stirring?  
Prison, bison, treasure trove,  
Treason, hover, cover, cove,  
Perseverance, severance. Ribald  
Rhymes (but piebald doesn't) with nibbled.

Phaeton, paeon, gnat, ghat, gnaw,  
Lien, psychic, shone, bone, pshaw.  
Don't be down, my own, but rough it,  
And distinguish buffet, buffet;  
Brood, stood, roof, rook, school, wool, boon,  
Worcester, Boleyn, to impugn.  
Say in sounds correct and sterling  
Hearse, hear, hearken, year and yearling.  
Evil, devil, mezzotint,  
Mind the Z! (A gentle hint.)

Now you need not pay attention  
To such sounds as I don't mention,  
Sounds like pores, pause, pours and paws,  
Rhyming with the pronoun yours;  
Nor are proper names included,  
Though I often heard, as you did,  
Funny rhymes to unicorn,  
Yes, you know them, Vaughan and Strachan.

No, my maiden, coy and comely,  
I don't want to speak of Cholmondeley.  
No. Yet Froude compared with proud  
Is no better than McLeod.  
But mind trivial and vial,  
Tripod, menial, denial,  
Troll and trolley, realm and ream,  
Schedule, mischief, schism, and scheme.

Argil, gill, Argyll, gill. Surely  
May be made to rhyme with Raleigh,  
But you're not supposed to say  
Piquet rhymes with sobriquet.  
Had this invalid invalid  
Worthless documents? How pallid,  
How uncouth he, couchant, looked,  
When for Portsmouth I had booked!

Zeus, Thebes, Thales, Aphrodite,  
Paramour, enamoured, flighty,  
Episodes, antipodes,  
Acquiesce, and obsequies.  
Please don't monkey with the geyser,  
Don't peel 'taters with my razor,  
Rather say in accents pure:  
Nature, stature and mature.

Pious, impious, limb, climb, glumly,  
Worsted, worsted, crumbly, dumbly,  
Conquer, conquest, vase, phase, fan,  
Wan, sedan and artisan.  
The TH will surely trouble you  
More than R, CH or W.  
Say then these phonetic gems:  
Thomas, thyme, Theresa, Thames.

Thompson, Chatham, Waltham, Streatham,  
There are more but I forget 'em-  
Wait! I've got it: Anthony,  
Lighten your anxiety.  
The archaic word albeit  
Does not rhyme with eight-you see it;  
With and forthwith, one has voice,  
One has not, you make your choice.

Shoes, goes, does. Now first say: finger;  
Then say: singer, ginger, linger.  
Real, zeal, mauve, gauze and gauge,  
Marriage, foliage, mirage, age,  
Hero, heron, query, very,  
Parry, tarry fury, bury,  
Dost, lost, post, and doth, cloth, loth,  
Job, Job, blossom, bosom, oath.

Faugh, oppugnant, keen oppugners,  
Bowing, bowing, banjo-tuners  
Holm you know, but noes, canoes,  
Puisne, truism, use, to use?  
Though the difference seems little,  
We say actual, but victual,  
Seat, sweat, chaste, caste, Leigh, eight, height,  
Put, nut, granite, and unite.

Reefer does not rhyme with deafer,  
Feoffer does, and zephyr, heifer.  
Dull, bull, Geoffrey, George, ate, late,  
Hint, pint, senate, but sedate.  
Gaelic, Arabic, pacific,  
Science, conscience, scientific;  
Tour, but our, dour, succour, four,  
Gas, alas, and Arkansas.

Say manoeuvre, yacht and vomit,  
Next omit, which differs from it  
Bona fide, alibi  
Gyrate, dowry and awry.  
Sea, idea, guinea, area,  
Psalm, Maria, but malaria.  
Youth, south, southern, cleanse and clean,  
Doctrine, turpentine, marine.

Compare alien with Italian,  
Dandelion with battalion,  
Rally with ally; yea, ye,  
Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, key, quay!  
Say aver, but ever, fever,  
Neither, leisure, skein, receiver.  
Never guess--it is not safe,  
We say calves, valves, half, but Ralf.

Starry, granary, canary,  
Crevice, but device, and eyrie,  
Face, but preface, then grimace,  
Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass, glass, bass.  
Bass, large, target, gin, give, verging,  
Ought, oust, joust, and scour, but scouring;  
Ear, but earn; and ere and tear  
Do not rhyme with here but heir.

Mind the O of off and often  
Which may be pronounced as orphan,  
With the sound of saw and sauce;  
Also soft, lost, cloth and cross.  
Pudding, puddle, putting. Putting?  
Yes: at golf it rhymes with shutting.  
Respite, spite, consent, resent.  
Liable, but Parliament.

Seven is right, but so is even,  
Hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen,  
Monkey, donkey, clerk and jerk,  
Asp, grasp, wasp, demesne, cork, work.  
A of valour, vapid, vapour,  
S of news (compare newspaper),  
G of gibbet, gibbon, gist,  
I of antichrist and grist,

Differ like diverse and divers,  
Rivers, strivers, shivers, fivers.  
Once, but nonce, toll, doll, but roll,  
Polish, polish, poll and poll.  
Pronunciation--think of Psyche!-  
Is appalling, stout and spiky.

It's a dark abyss or tunnel  
Strewn with stones like rowlock, gunwale,  
Islington, and Isle of Wight,  
Housewife, verdict and indict.  
Don't you think so, reader, rather,  
Saying lather, bather, father?  
Finally, which rhymes with enough,  
Though, through, bough, cough, sough, tough?  
Hiccough has the sound of 'cup' . . .  
My advice is: give it up!